

Review

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Recent Digital Marketing Research Trend: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Review

Recent Digital Marketing Research Trend: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract: Digital marketing publications have flourished in the last two decades, but the literature remains fragmented and juvenile. This review maps the recent digital marketing landscape. 323 articles published between 2019 and 2023 were retrieved from Web of Science, Scopus, and ProQuest databases. Boolean Operators were applied to search documents using search keys like "interactive marketing," "digital marketing," "online marketing," "internet marketing," "web marketing," and "e-marketing". A bibliometric analysis was done using VosViewer 1.6.20 software. The results exhibited incremental trends in digital marketing publications during the last five years and will remain a growing global research agenda. Digital marketing as an umbrella term started occurring most frequently after 2021. Indonesia, India, Ukraine, the USA, and the UK were the top five contributors to the digital marketing literature. The Journal of Sustainability, Economic and Social Development Book of Proceedings, and Cogent Business and Management Journal were the top three publishers. Web marketing, omnichannel marketing, augmented reality, social media influencers, tourism, higher education, and SMEs were the most frequently studied contexts. The least researched areas were digital competencies, privacy, personal data protection, security measures, and prospects and obstacles to adopting digital marketing.

Keywords: Digital Marketing; Bibliometric Analysis

1. Introduction

The exponential growth of 21st-century digital technologies that involve internet technologies, web technologies, telecommunication technologies, and computer technologies disrupts a firm's conventional marketing practices (Al Kendi et al., 2023; Happ & Horváth, 2020; Karnitis et al., 2019; Lavanya et al., 2022). Historically, the Internet was designed to transmit data within and outside organizations over a long distance. Gradually, it converges ((Masrianto et al., 2022) with computer technologies to store data, and telecommunication technologies to transmit data in audio, video, image, and text forms (Laudon & Laudon, 2013, P.247). This convergence provides new business models, markets, and marketing strategies that integrate firms' value chains (Kotler et al., 2017; Saura et al., 2020).

Even though the stage of digitalization remains divided (Alavion & Taghdisi, 2021), as far as the digital economy is concerned, embedding digital systems into a firm's value chain is compulsory to survive (Hughes et al., 2022). Digitalization has obligatory effects on a firm. On the one hand, the digitalization process destroys traditional marketing models. For instance, digital data storage and sharing devices like flash disks and wireless connectivity replaced CD drives and floppy discs. Marketers who fail to digitalize will lose their business because they will be forced to lose their business to digitalized and innovative small start-ups. On the other hand, digital systems

complement traditional marketing and trigger new business opportunities like integrated print media and online subscriptions to effectively distribute published articles.

Most researchers unarguably recognized these effects of digitalization in shaping the competitive position of firms (Fayvishenko et al., 2023; Handayani et al., 2022; Mohammad, 2022) through enhancing innovation (open innovation) (Cano et al., 2022), improving productivity, and reaching customers in a better way than ever before (Nadanyiova et al., 2021; Pavlič et al., 2022). Nuseir et al. (2020), in their study of hotel contexts in the UAE, concluded that digital technology adoption enables firms to gain a competitive advantage. With digital platforms, firms can easily engage, co-create, collaborate with their customers, and influence how they respond to marketing stimuli (Hein et al., 2019). Therefore, firms in the digital era should concurrently improve their traditional business models, and innovate digital platforms.

Digital marketing is the most prevalent business model derived from digitalization (Manea & Scripcariu, 2021; Niininen, 2022; Pihir et al., 2019). Digital marketing, as defined by most referred authors of marketing Phillip Kotler, Hermawan Kartajaya, and Iwan Setiawan, is the transformation of traditional marketing practices into digital systems using internet connectivity (Kotler et al., 2017). In other words, digital marketing refers to using the Internet and digital devices to run or support the firm's marketing activities (Ayachi & Jallouli, 2022).

This subfield of marketing is very young and appeals to many researchers and academicians with numerous issues yet to be uncovered (Desai, 2019; Febrianti et al., 2022; Sang, 2024). The digital marketing literature remains fragmented (G. Al-Weshah, 2018; G. A. Al-Weshah et al., 2021; Esmaelnezhad et al., 2023; Wahyu et al., 2023). Yet, the potential of digital marketing is not exhaustively utilized, and its evolution has not yet aged (Nadanyiova et al., 2023). Therefore, this review maps the existing digital marketing literature to analyze research trends focusing on the most recent five years' publications.

2. Materials and Methods

This research utilized a bibliometric analysis of existing digital marketing literature published in the past five years (2019 – 2023). A bibliometric analysis is a scientific research method that provides a comprehensive insight into a subject based on the units of study such as the country of the authors, years of publication, publication title, keywords co-occurrence, subject or themes of research, and impacts of publications (Dervis, 2019; Donthu et al., 2021; Ellegaard, 2018; Ellegaard & Wallin, 2015; Passas, 2024; Ziegler, 2009). It tells more about the existence of a research agenda in the area of interest before delving deep into it (Sharma & Kumar, 2022).

The researchers purposively selected three high-ranked multidisciplinary abstracting and indexing databases; ProQuest Databases, Scopus, and Web of Science. Most previous review works focused on one or two databases. Using multiple databases allows the researcher to locate the existing literature exhaustively.

The second activity at the search stage is selecting a search strategy. Despite using several databases, the "Booleans search strategy" was used to identify sufficient articles. This strategy combines multiple search keys with Boolean operators like [...] AND [...] OR [...], AND NOT. This method provides many documents with different title names from several sources. Thus, researchers used digital marketing interchangeably with terms like e-marketing, online marketing, internet marketing, web marketing, and interactive marketing, where all terms reflect the use of the internet, web, and electronic devices to conduct marketing activities (Abdullah, 2023). Therefore, the researcher used a combined search as TITLE= ("Digital Marketing" OR "E-marketing" OR "Online Marketing" OR "Internet Marketing" OR "Web Marketing" OR "Interactive Marketing").

Even though the researcher felt that a larger number of publications was necessary to discover knowledge gaps, not all search results are pertinent. Hence, the third search stage is to extract relevant data for detailed evaluation. Filtrations were done several times using limited search strategies. To do so, the researcher used search limit strategies like; title, keywords, date, source, subject, language, and abstracts.

Furthermore, the researcher screened the articles based on the abstract review to exclude less relevant articles that may not be related to the objectives. This method enables the researcher to synthesize the literature on the topic early in the review (Polanin et al., 2019; Rathbone et al., 2015) and to reduce the number of documents to a limited and fundamental one. Abstracts were screened based on relevance to the subject domain and relatedness of article objectives to the topics(titles) of discussion: "Digital Marketing". Based on the abstract review 82 documents were dropped from the sample. Hence, 323 scientific documents were selected for this review.

Table 1. Summary of Search Strategies and Search Results.

Search	Inclusion/exclusion criteria	Included	Excluded
Strategy 1: Search limited by Title	"Digital Marketing“, "e-marketing“, "online marketing“, "Internet Marketing“, "Web Marketing“, "Interactive marketing"	n = 38.090	
Strategy 2: Search limited By publication years	The last five years (2019-2023)	n = 4.939	33.151
Strategy 3: Search limited by Document Type	Article, Conference paper, Book chapter, Review, Book, dissertation	n = 4.885	54
Strategy 4: Search limited by language	English as publication language	n = 2.129	2.756
Strategy 5: Search limited by Source	Source with 5 or more number of documents count	n = 1.020	1,109
Strategy 6: Limited by Access Type	Open Access documents	n = 481	539
Strategy 7: Clearing Duplication & Retracted	Removed Retracted Articles Duplicated articles checked	n = 405	76
Strategy 8: Abstract Screening	Relevance, quality, fitness to objective checked	n = 323	82

Source: compiled by the researcher, (2023)

3. Results

The analysis of the review focused on different types of analysis consists the country of authors, co-authorship, publications trend by year, publication trend by source, keywords co-occurrence, and research themes.

3.1. Mapping Digital Marketing Literature by Country of Authors

This review identified the top 10 countries of authors of publications in digital marketing literature in the Scopus and Web of Science databases. The map indicated in Figure 1 was sketched based on the data retrieved from the two databases. Data collected from the ProQuest database were not incorporated because documents were not defined by country. Figure 1 shows that Indonesia contributed the highest number of publications in the digital marketing literature in SCOPUS and WOS databases between 2019 and 2023, accounting for 22 documents.

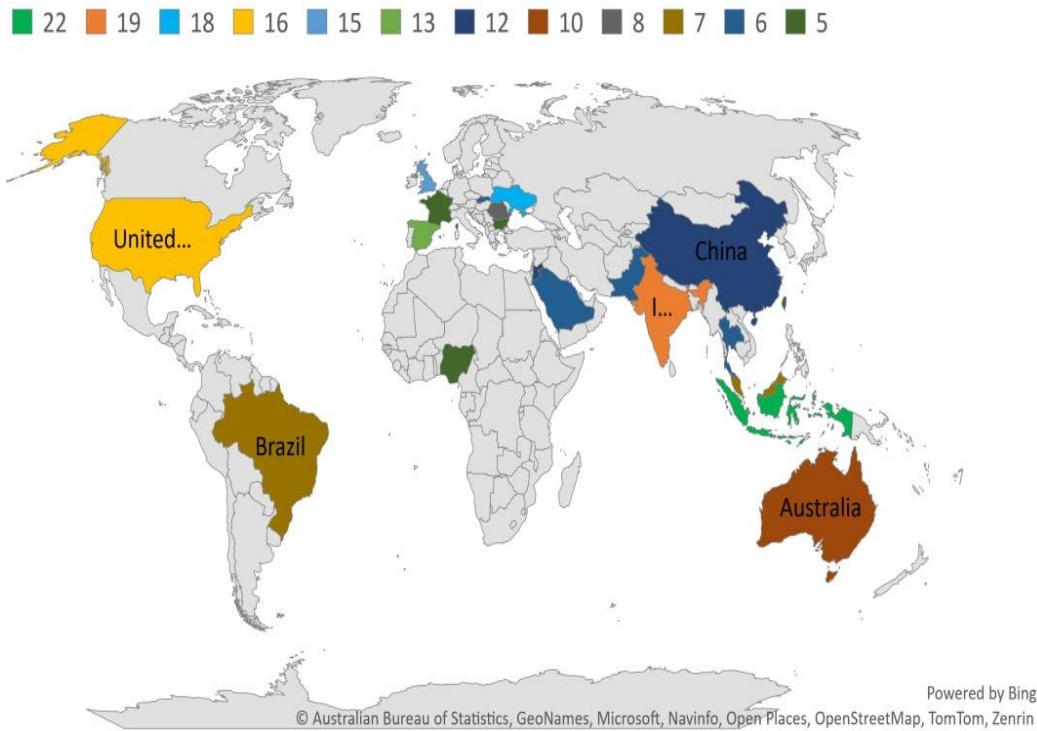


Figure 1. Top 10 Contributors'Countries Represented in SCOPUS and WOS Databases. Source: Own Compilation from SCOPUS and WOS Databases, (2024).

The second-place contributor county was India with a total DM document of 19 followed by Ukraine, which contributed 18 publications. The other top 10 countries represented in the DM literature include the United States (16), United Kingdom (15), Spain (13), Jordan (12), China (12), Australia (10), and Romania (8). South American and African countries were at the foot of digital marketing publication lists by country. A few African countries contribute a limited number of articles accounts 1 to 3 publications each. Among these, Ethiopia contributed only one article published by Misganaw (2019) entitled E-Marketing Adoption: An Overview from Ethiopian Tourism Businesses.

This distribution of authors by country speaks that digital marketing is a growing research agenda regardless of economic development, and geographical location. It also indicates that most digital marketing publications published in the last five years were from Asia, Australia, Europe, and America. This unveils the existence of under-researched contexts like South America, and Africa

3.2. Co-authorship Analysis of Digital Marketing Publications (2019-2023)

The co-authorship network was analyzed to identify the top 15 authors of digital marketing publications from 2019 to 2023. The result revealed that 1038 authors collaborate (co-author) in at least one document. Based on the co-authorship link and total link strength, 15 authors were selected (see Figure 2).

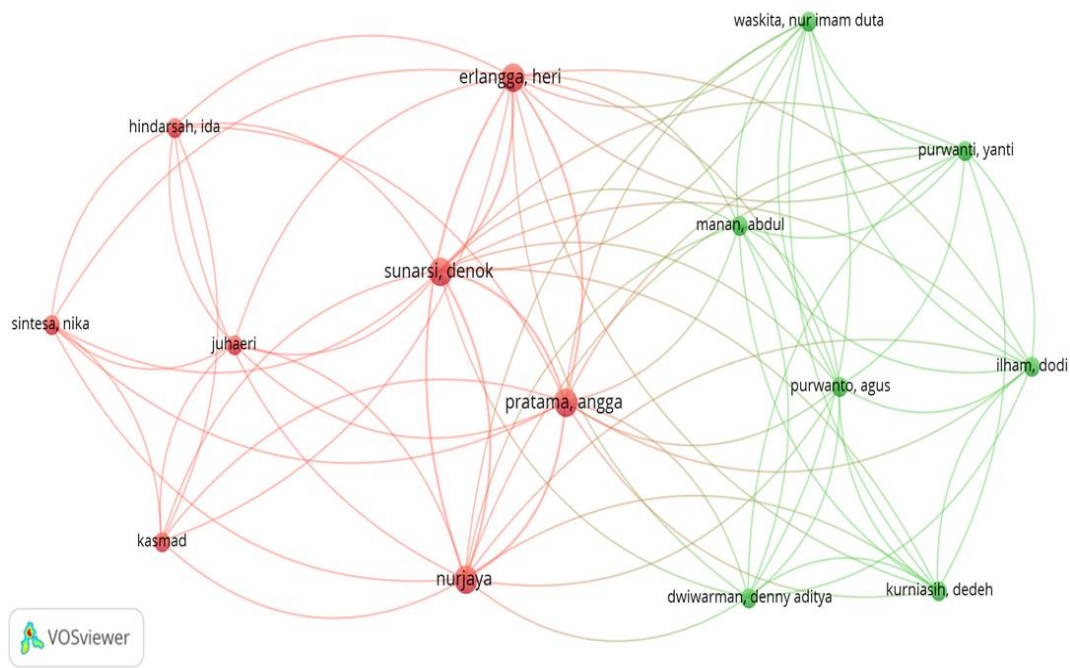


Figure 2. Co-authorship Analysis of Digital Marketing publication (2019-2023). Source: Own compilation from ProQuest, SCOPUS, and WOS, (2023).

The co-authorship link indicates the number of times a researcher co-authors with other researchers. The co-authorship total link strength reflects the strength of the researcher’s link with other researchers. The collaboration network exhibits 15 authors linked with each other in the digital marketing literature. Authors like Erlangga Heri, Senarsi Denok, Pratama Angga, and Nurjaya were the leading collaborators.

3.3. Trends of Digital Marketing Publications by Years (2019-2023)

Based on Figure 2, the total publication trendline over the five years indicated growth in digital marketing research with an average increasing rate of 23%. Steep growths were observed during 2021 and 2023, meaning these years are critical in the digital marketing literature. The number of publications during 2020 and 2022 slightly decreases.

3.4. Mapping Digital Marketing Research by Sources Title

Locating digital marketing literature by its publication or source title is also fundamental. The data were collected from 161 sources subscribed to the three databases. Table 2 depicts that the sources that published a greater number of digital marketing articles from 2019 to 2023 were the Journal of Sustainability, Economic and Social Development: Book of Proceedings, Cogent Business and Management, Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing, Academy of Marketing Studies Journal, Journal of Physics: conference series, Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education, Marketing Education Review, Innovative Marketing, and International Journal of Online marketing. This implies that digital marketing is multidisciplinary integrating thoughts, practices, and technologies of business, economics, computer, mathematics, education, and innovations. It can be concluded that digital marketing is considered a more sustainable approach to marketing practices as the Journal of Sustainability published more articles.

Table 2. Top 10 Source Title of Digital Marketing publications between 2019 to 2023.

Publication Title	Number of documents
Sustainability	22
Economic and Social Development: Book of Proceedings	14

Cogent Business & Management	10
Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing	9
Academy of Marketing Studies Journal	8
Journal of Physics: Conference Series	8
Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education	8
Marketing Education Review	6
Innovative Marketing	5
International Journal of Online Marketing	5

Source: own compilation from ProQuest, SCOPUS, and WOS, (2023).

3.5. Mapping Digital Marketing Publications by Keywords Co-occurrence

A keywords network (co-occurrence) analysis of 323 digital marketing documents was visualized in Figure 3. VOSviewer software identified 1722 keywords that occurred in sampled digital marketing literature. To analyze the co-occurrence of the keywords, a visualization network was created to calculate the links between keywords and the total strength of links with other keywords. The minimum number of keyword co-occurrences was limited to 10(ten). Keywords that had occurred less than ten times were excluded from the analysis. 47 (forty-seven) items meet the threshold. Furthermore, the researcher restricted the analysis to keywords that go inline or are most commonly used with “digital marketing”. Finally, 39 keywords were visualized into 3(three) clusters of co-occurrence networks. The network visualization grouped items into clusters based on the importance of items and their co-occurrence as measured by the total strength of links of keywords with other keywords. Thus, the keywords with a higher total link strength than other keywords will be selected as most commonly occurred Sang (2024), van Eck and Waltman (2023)

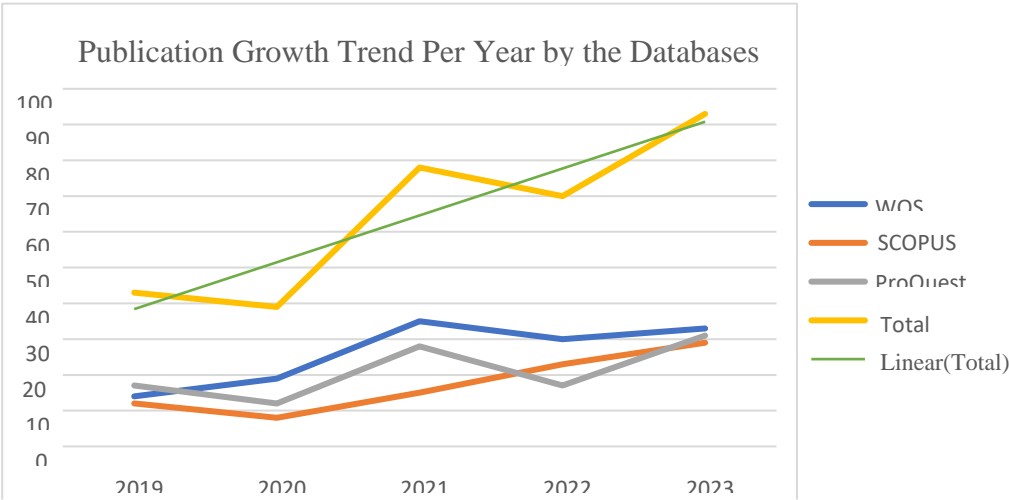


Figure 3. Digital Marketing Publication Trends By Year on ProQuest, SCOPUS, and WOS Databases. Source: Researchers compilation from the Databases, (2023).

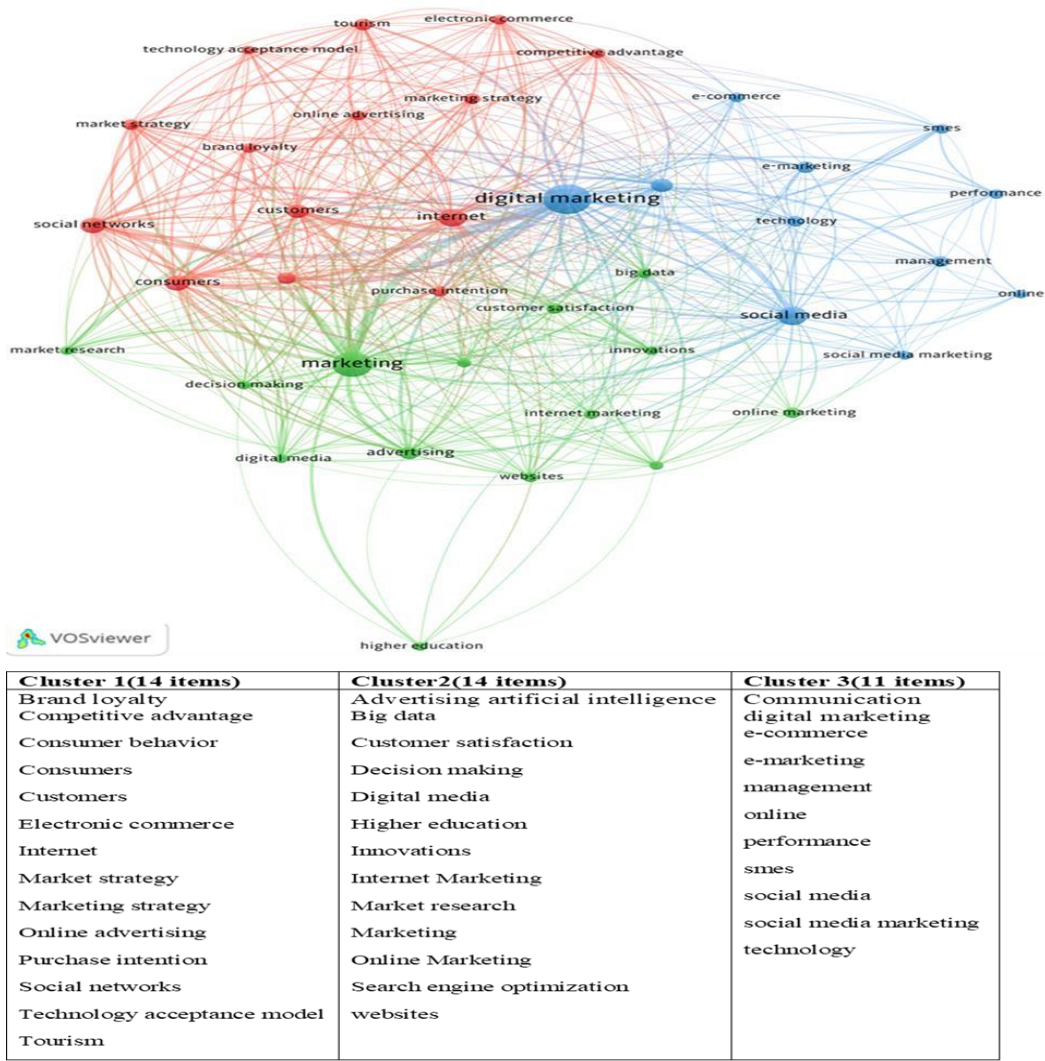


Figure 4. VOSviewer network visualization for mapping keywords related to digital marketing. Source: Own Sketch based on sampled documents from ProQuest, SCOPUS, and WOS, (2023).

Figure 3 depicts three clusters of keywords with a higher total strength of links with other keywords. A larger circle in the network visualization map represented digital marketing. Its label is more visible than other terms. This indicates that digital marketing has occurred more often (163) than other keywords in the literature. It was linked to 38 (thirty-eight) other keywords in the literature with 486 total link strength. Digital marketing co-occurred together with different keywords in 703 times.

The researcher generates six important insights about digital marketing literature from the networks. The first insight represented on the visualization network is the most commonly occurring key terms. Digital marketing was the most common keyword from 2019 to 2023. This finding is similar to the finding of Abdullah et al. (2023). Digital marketing has most commonly co-occurred with e-commerce, e-marketing, technology, management, performance, social media, online, social media marketing, and communication. The second insight is that digital marketing has been used interchangeably with internet marketing, online marketing, e-marketing, and e-commerce. This can be considered as a lack of precision in understanding the concept of digital marketing. The third insight is that prior researchers have studied digital marketing relationships with organizational outputs (marketing strategy, performance, communication, innovations, profitability, management, and decision-making), and customer outcomes (brand loyalty, consumer behavior, purchase intention, social networks, and customer satisfaction). The fourth insight was the most researched digital marketing strategies; online advertising (total link strength 61), search engine optimization

(total link strength 44), and social media marketing (total link strength 24). Finding about social media marketing is consistent with Ayachi and Jallouli (2022). The fifth insight is about digital marketing infrastructure. The digital infrastructure mentioned in the publications were the internet, big data, artificial intelligence, search engines, websites, digital media, and social media. The last instinct obtained from the visualization network was the most researched context in the digital marketing literature. Three contexts that occurred in the co-occurrence analysis were tourism studied 17 by publications (Balatska et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2022; Mitova et al., 2021), higher education in 14 documents (Chinchanchokchai & McKelvey, 2023; Kemp et al., 2019; Miaskiewicz, 2022; Peterson, 2021; Ye et al., 2021; Zahay et al., 2019, 2022), and SMEs studied in 7 documents (Cadavid & Valencia-Arias, 2022; Chinakidzwa & Phiri, 2020; Gao et al., 2023; Zahara et al., 2023).

3.6. Overlay Visualization Network of Keywords

Overlay visualization sets keywords into clusters so that themes and detailed information are formed. Keywords that have been co-occurred were clustered by years of occurrences. Digital marketing was a keyword that most frequently occurred between 2022 and 2023 (see Fig. 5).

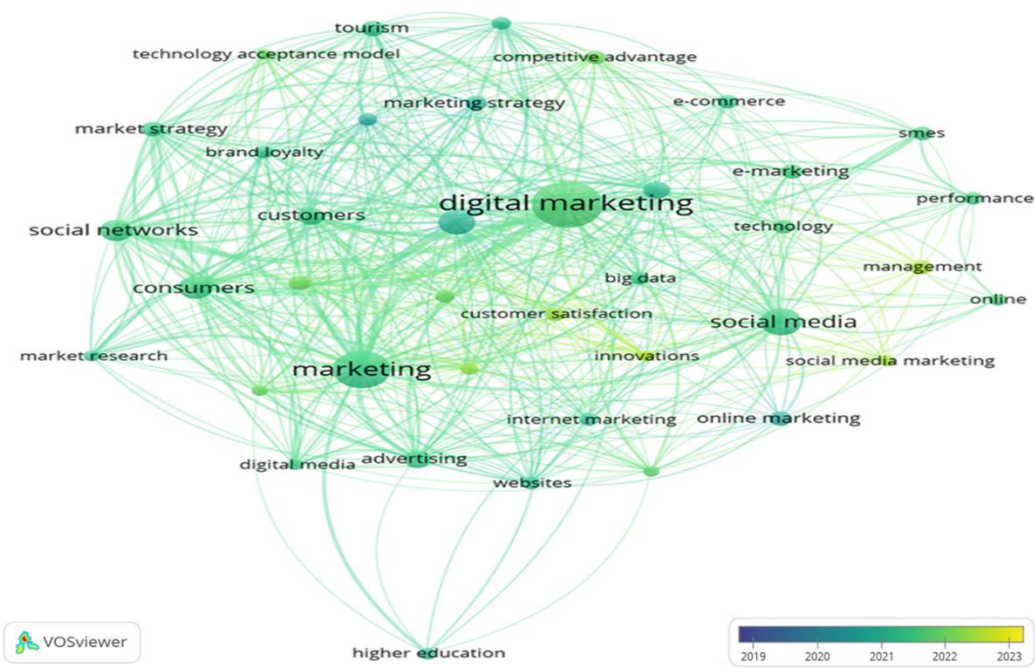


Figure 5. Overlay Visualization Network of Keywords. Source: (VosViewer map, 20240).

Digital marketing most frequently occurs with themes like communication, e-commerce, e-marketing, management, online, performance, SME, social media, social media marketing, and technology. The second cluster considered was keywords that most frequently occurred during 2023. This cluster consists of themes like,- artificial intelligence, big data, consumer satisfaction, consumer behavior, digital media, and search engine optimization. The third cluster consists of keywords that mostly occurred before 2020 consisting of brand loyalty, competitive advantage, customers, electronic commerce, internet, market strategy, marketing strategy, online advertising, social networks, technology acceptance, and tourism. This indicates that the field of digital marketing research continues to be extensive and diverse in terms of subject matter, context, and level of development. This aligns with the conclusion drawn by (Busca & Bertrandias, 2020)

3.7. Research Themes of Digital Marketing

The existing digital marketing publications addressed different research themes that indicate the depth and width of the field. The researcher categorized the publications into 15 different research themes by analyzing the titles, objectives, and contents (See Table 3).

Table 3. Digital Marketing Research Areas by subject or themes.

Research subject area	Number of documents	Percentage
Conceptualization of DM	5	2%
Effectiveness of DM	14	4%
Digital marketing trends	31	10%
Digital marketing tools/strategies	56	17%
Digital marketing adoption	23	7%
Digital marketing related to organizational performance	41	13%
Digital marketing related to customer outcomes	47	15%
Digital marketing education	30	9%
Customer Data, confidentiality, Privacy and Security	8	2%
Digital Marketing research	6	2%
Digital marketing monitoring	4	1%
Factors Affecting Digital Marketing	27	8%
Digital marketing Competencies	6	2%
Digital marketing challenges and prospects	12	4%
Covid -19 & digital marketing	13	4%
Total	323	100%

Source: own compilation from Scopus, ProQuest, and Web of Science database, (2023).

It can be seen that 17% of the literature was related to digital marketing tools and strategies suitable for different situations. No single digital marketing strategy best fits all situations, business types, or organizations. Marketers must select strategies based on their context and purposes. Digital marketing strategies such as web marketing strategy (Cerquetti & Romagnoli, 2023), omnichannel approach (Floričić & Šker, 2023), augmented reality as a brand engagement tool(Daoud et al., 2023), brand messaging through Facebook (Dearlove et al., 2021), and social media influencers (El Yaagoubi & Machrafi, 2021) were few of the digital marketing strategies indicated in the literature.

Research about the effect of digital marketing on customer outcomes (customer satisfaction, loyalty, purchase intention, preferences, and behaviors) represents 15% of the sampled literature(Alwan & Turki, 2022; Anh et al., 2023; Malia et al., 2023; Mutalp et al., 2022; Qtaishat, 2022; Schutte & Chauke, 2022). Subjects like digital marketing's impact on organizational performance accounts for 13% (Algumzi, 2022; Chong et al., 2018; Cruz-milán et al., 2021; Fachriyan et al., 2022; Jaafar & Khan, n.d.; Kuntonbutr et al., 2019; Magano & Cunha, 2020; Razak et al., 2023; Umar, 2020), digital marketing trends(10%), digital marketing education(9%), factors affecting digital marketing (8%), digital marketing adoption(7%), and digital marketing challenges and prospects(4%) were among areas that the existing digital marketing literature addressed. Though few research were conducted there exists unfilled research gaps in the areas of digital marketing conceptualization (Busca & Bertrandias, 2020; Mahmutovic, 2021; Premnath & Nateson, 2021; Vynogradova et al., 2020; Wang, 2021), online privacy, ethics, and security (Behera et al., 2022; Durgabhavani & Krishnan, 2019; Han et al., 2023; Mandal, 2019; Tiwari et al., 2023), digital marketing performance evaluation and monitoring (Lara-Mejía et al., 2022; Matosas-López, 2021; Mota-Castillo et al., 2023; Tataryntseva et al., 2022), digital marketing competencies (Elhajjar, 2022; Kovacs & Zarandne, 2022; Nichifor et al., 2022), digital marketing research methods (Diez-Martin et al., 2019; Liao & Tsai, 2021) and digital marketing adoption (Dabas et al., 2021; Inneh et al., 2023; Misganaw, 2019; Nuseir et al., 2020; Rana, 2018; Upadhyay & Sharma, 2023; Vasumathi & Joe, 2021; Yaseen et al., 2019).

4. Discussion

This bibliometric review identified the digital marketing literature landscape in three popular databases Scopus, Web of Science, and ProQuest. Digital marketing is one of the fastest-growing business areas in the world. This research identified publications from more than 60 countries, and 161 publication sources affiliated to different countries. Indonesia (22), India (19), and Ukraine (18) were the top 3 countries contributed to the digital marketing literature. The other countries represented in the top 10 list of DM literature include the United States (16), United Kingdom (15), Spain (13), Jordan (12), China (12), Australia (10), and Romania (8). This country review provides two important research insights. First, it implies the existence of variation in the distribution of digital marketing literature among countries. Future researchers can look into digital marketing insights from countries with fewer or no document perspectives. Second, the review implied that digital marketing has become a global research agenda for the growing number of researchers. This was evident by previous researchers (Abdullah et al., 2023; Noorbehbahani et al., 2019; Wahyu et al., 2023) who conducted a systematic literature review on digital marketing and inferred the worldwide spread of research interests in digital marketing.

Concerning publication growth trends by publication year, the review shows an increasing number of publications between 2019 and 2023 with an average growth rate of 23%. The highest number of publications occurred in the years 2021 and 2023. However, it is important to note that this review was based on several digital marketing agendas, and some of these agendas are found at different maturity levels. Extant research presumed that the field of digital marketing is continuously evolving (Niininen, 2022) with new, but fragmented insights (Busca & Bertrandias, 2020) rather than being saturated (Marchiori et al., 2020; Munna et al., 2023).

Existent literature discloses that digital marketing literature grows in all dimensions of human life. The data was collected from 161 multidisciplinary sources that address digital marketing theories and applications in communication, health, business, education, public policy, tourism and hospitality, higher education, small and medium enterprises, manufacturing, pharmaceutical industry, technology, data science and algorithm, well-being, and security. The most frequent publisher of digital marketing articles in the year 2019 to 2023 was the Journal of Sustainability (22 articles) with a yearly average of 4.4, Economic and Social Development: Book of Proceedings (14 articles) with a yearly average of 2.8, and Cogent Business and Management (10 articles) accounts 2 articles per year. Therefore, digital marketing is a multidisciplinary field, which has several untapped future research agendas.

The other unit of analysis of this review was keyword occurrence in the digital marketing literature. The finding shows that digital marketing occurred most frequently (occurrence = 163, links = 38, total link strength = 486) in the literature. Overlay visualization showed that digital marketing is the most frequently occurring keyword in the literature published after 2021. This implies that digital marketing as a research agenda is at its infant stage. Considering the concepts related to digital marketing, there was inconsistency in the literature. Concepts interchangeable with digital marketing were observed like online marketing, and internet marketing (mostly used before 2021 (most occurred after 2021)). Furthermore, previous researchers studied the digital marketing relationship with other keywords including performance, customer behavior, brand loyalty, customer satisfaction, customer engagement, competitive advantage, and management. In addition, the most frequently researched contexts of digital marketing were tourism (link strength = 15), SMEs (link strength = 7), and higher education (link strength = 2). Keyword analysis also identified the most researched digital marketing strategies such as e-commerce, online advertising, search engine optimization, advertising artificial intelligence, and social media marketing. It can be concluded that digital marketing infrastructures (internet, big data, artificial intelligence, search engines, websites, digital media, and social media) were the other areas addressed in the extant literature on digital marketing.

The other unit of analysis was the subject area covered in the literature. The most researched subject areas include digital marketing strategies (17%), digital marketing impact on customers (15%), digital marketing impacts on organizational performance (13%), digital marketing evolution or trends (10%), and digital marketing in the education sector (9%). This implied that previous

researchers were more attracted to digital marketing strategies and impacts. Research areas related to digital marketing competencies, digital marketing and privacy, personal data protection, challenges and opportunities of digital marketing, monitoring and controlling digital marketing, and digital marketing research methods were less researched subjects.

5. Conclusion

This review provides important insight for academicians/researchers, practitioners, and policymakers about the major trends in the digital marketing era. These involve a changing business landscape made up of a large population of digitally savvy online shoppers and digital marketers providing many alternatives using omnichannel approaches, continuous short-tempered digital technology innovations that intensify the digitalization process of business based on big data analytics, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and crowdsourcing, escalating online personal privacy, ethics, and confidentiality problems, the growing interest for global digital data and privacy protections.

Based on the review's findings, a broad conclusion can be drawn that digital marketing is an expanding area of study that provides businesses functioning in the digital economy with competitive strategies and efficient business models. In addition, the researcher inferred that the proliferation of new technologies and advances in consumer behaviour derives new research gaps in the field of digital marketing.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, methods, data retrieval, analysis, writing, Mr. Daniel Tekle, and Supervision Dr. Aschalew Degoma.

Conflicts of Interest: "The authors declare no conflicts of interest."

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

DM	Digital Marketing
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
WOS	Web of Science

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